

APPROVED

Rockville Environment Commission Minutes of the Meeting of Thursday, November 5, 2015

Black-Eyed Susan Room, City Hall,
111 Maryland Avenue, Rockville, Maryland

Attendance

Commissioners Present: John Becker, Steve Cardon, Amanda Matheny, Clark Reed, Steve Sprague, and Helen Triolo.

Commissioners Absent: Alicia Hosmer and Lea Rosenbohm

City Staff: Erica Shingara (Environmental Management)

Guests: Councilmember Palakovich Carr, Maribeth Gravunder (Energy Committee), the FIRST LEGO League team.

Meeting Commencement and Introductions

The meeting convened at 7:03 pm by Chair Reed. Introduction of guest Marybeth Gravunder from the Energy Committee.

Meeting Agenda Review and Revision

Commissioner Becker requested adding an update on the Joulebox to new business.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

- Commissioner Sprague moved and Commissioner Triolo seconded a motion to approve the September 3, 2015 meeting minutes. The motion passed 5-0 (Commissioner Cardon was absent from the vote).
- Commissioner Matheny identified a typo in the minutes approval section. Commissioner Sprague moved and Commissioner Matheny seconded a motion to approve the October 1, 2015 meeting minutes with the correction. The motion passed 6-0.

First Lego League Presentation - Styrofoam

The FIRST LEGO League team (King Farm Environmental Group, organized by Kenric T Brooks Sr.) presented a report on the health and environmental problems associated with Styrofoam use and suggested potential alternatives. They recommended that Styrofoam be banned from use in restaurants and stores or offer an incentive to encourage the use of alternatives. The Commission thanked the team and their parents for the presentation and inquired why the team selected this issue. Their program requires the team to select a problem that is important to society and then solve it in a unique way. The team chose Styrofoam because of health and environmental concerns and they noticed that Styrofoam was commonly found in SSL streams cleanups because it does not break down. The Commission noted that Montgomery County has a Styrofoam ban on foodware and packing peanuts that starts January 1, 2016 and that this is a timely issue for the Commission and the City to consider.

Proposed Revisions to Forest and Tree Preservation Ordinance (FTPO)

Councilmember Palakovich Carr attended the meeting to address the Commission's request for additional information on the approval of the August 3rd amendment to the FTPO and manual.¹ She described that the Mayor and Council had originally identified the FTPO as a priority at their retreat held at the beginning of the current term. A proposal for changes to the ordinance was initiated over the summer; however, it became too late in the term to make comprehensive changes to the ordinance because more robust discussions were needed.

The Mayor and Council approved a narrow targeted modification that primarily impacts Montgomery College to allow the College to keep State funding for the construction of the new Student Services Learning Center project that is planned for construction on an existing parking lot. According to the College, the Student Services Center project would have caused the College to exceed the 25% threshold that guides afforestation requirements for previously developed sites. This would trigger additional afforestation requirements that translate into a significant fee-in-lieu payment which is not in the project's approved capital budget. If the approval was delayed, the College could lose State funding and would not be able to complete the project. As an alternative, the College requested the City delegate forestry review for the Student Services Center project to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR); however, this could compromise the City's forestry review authority. The Mayor and Council expressed support for the Student Services Center project and for modifying the FTPO and Manual provisions, on a limited basis, to allow the College to proceed with the Center under the City's development review process. While the FTPO and manual is not yet rescheduled for the Mayor and Council, it is identified as a potential topic for a more systematic and holistic discussion in the new term.

The Commission held extensive discussion on this topic and expressed concern that the amendment appeared to be made for a single entity in an expedited process. They inquired on the future schedule for the FTPO and when to send comments; if the change applies to future projects or if it was a one-time modification; requested additional information on the College's options and the estimated fee-in-lieu costs under the previous standard; and posed questions regarding observed tree removal activities observed at the College. The Commission was in agreement with the other recommendations outlined in the FTPO memo and will defer comments on the August 3rd decision to increase the disturbance threshold until the next meeting when more information is provided.

- **Action Item:** Erica Shingara will contact Forestry for more information about observed tree removal activities at the College and clarification on the College's options and estimated fee-in-lieu amount under the previous ordinance. The information will be brought to the December meeting for final consideration.

Environment Commission Budget

The Commission reviewed a spreadsheet that included the FY 2016 budget requests from the Watershed Committee, Energy Committee, a summary of past expenditures, and an update on current supply inventories. Budget requests were not submitted by the Recycling and Sustainability Committees yet. The Commission discussed the current inventory and what types of items would best support outreach activities (e.g., reusable, child-friendly materials like the recycling pencils, coloring books and crayons). The Commission also discussed the option of hosting an

¹ The amendment increased the disturbed area threshold for calculating afforestation from 25% to 50% for projects on property that is 75% developed and consists of one or more parcels under common ownership aggregating at least 80 acres.

Environmental Film and if additional funds will be needed to supplement the Hometown Holidays' \$250 contribution film. Film options and costs have not been identified yet. The Watershed Committee also indicated that they will no longer need funds to purchase D-nets for stream monitoring since they can use EMD's kick seine net.

- **Action Item:** Commissioner Cardon moved and Commissioner Sprague seconded the motion to authorize purchase replacement parts for the Watershed Model (up to \$100). The motion passed unanimously. EMD will coordinate with the Watershed Committee on this purchase.
- **Action Item:** Committees will review the remaining budget requests and identify priorities for purchase so that purchases can be made prior to Hometown Holidays.

Committee Reports

- **Energy** – Chair Reed provided an update on the solar co-op; it has approximately 50 signed contracts, 206 registrations, 176 scheduled site visits, and 171 received proposals. The first co-op installation is complete and Channel 11 is schedule to film a solar installation in November.
- **Recycling and Composting**
 - Commissioner Sprague described that the Committee is focusing on promoting more recycling at events, more recycling in Town Center, and composting options.
 - Commissioner Triolo reported that she contacted last month's composting speaker Brenda Platt and is trying to arrange a tour of the Wangari Gardens in DC to learn about their community compost cooperative. The Commission expressed interest in attending this tour.
 - Commissioner Sprague reported that MDE passed rules for composting facilities and Montgomery County is drafting a composting plan that identifies composting options that is anticipated in December. Two closed landfills in the County (one located at the Gude landfill near Rockville that is also a landfill gas to energy facility) may be potential composting locations. The Commission suggested it could be a potential tour option for August and will continue to monitor the County's planning process.
- **Sustainability** – No update.
- **Watershed Protection** – Commissioner Matheny reported that the Maryvale stream cleanup was a success with approximately 27 volunteers and 24 bags of trash. She noted that volunteers found a wallet at the cleanup and returned to its owner. They wallet was lost in Town Center over the summer. Commissioners also noted less plastic bags in the stream.

Environment Management Division Update

Erica Shingara reviewed upcoming items:

- Re-appointments and vacancies: The City is advertising to fill the current vacancy and applications will be forwarded to the Commission.
- The Rainscapes Rewards program expanded in October and is now accepting applications from homeowners associations, condominium associations and other non-profits.
- On October 12th, the Mayor and Council approved the Gude solar canopy project, Watts Branch Watershed Study, and amendments to the Water Quality Protection Ordinance.
- The Cabin John stream monitoring site is available for a group to conduct stream monitoring.

- Staff is editing amendments to the Floodplain Ordinance to comply with new FEMA requirements. It is anticipated that it will be brought to the Commission this winter.
- On October 27, Rockville received recertification as a Sustainable Maryland Community.
- Representatives of Rockville, Gaithersburg and Tacoma Park are meeting with Montgomery County in November regarding the County's payment of local stormwater fees.
- EPA released rankings for the Green Power Partnership program:
 - The City of Rockville ranks 26th in the nation for total green power used by a local government.
 - The Rockville community (businesses, residents, government, institutions, etc.) collectively ranks 11th in the nation for total annual green power use (RECs, supply and onsite).
 - Montgomery County's Clean Energy Buyers Group (which includes Montgomery County Government, MCPS, Montgomery College, MNCPPC, the City of Rockville and other local governments) ranks 4th in the nation among local governments and 15th in the nation for all entities (governments, businesses, etc.).

New Business

- Commissioner Becker provided an update on the JouleBox. Permit materials are being prepared for the first installation in Howard County.
- The Commission discussed holding a planning retreat in January.
 - **Action item:** Chair Reed requested that each committee develop an action plan for 2016 to share with the Commission in January.
 - **Action item:** Erica Shingara will check on the availability of the cottage.
 - **Action item:** Commissioners will check on their availability on January 9 or 16, 2016 from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and report back to Erica.
 - **Action item:** Erica Shingara will forward Maribeth Gravunder links to the Environment Commission page and application.
 - **Action item:** Commissioner Triolo and Erica Shingara will coordinate a meeting with the City's Public Information Office to discuss outreach options and processes.

Adjourn

The Commission adjourned by acclamation at 8:54 p.m.

Next Commission Meeting

The next Commission meeting is tentatively scheduled for **Thursday, December 3, 2015 at 7:00 pm** in the **Diamondback Conference Room at the Rockville City Hall, 111 Maryland Avenue, Rockville Maryland 20850-2321**. The public is invited to attend.